

San Francisco Bay is the largest estuary on the west coast of the United States. Its 1,600 square miles of wetlands and open water are home to at least 800,000 waterbirds at any given time and to millions during peak migration. Some of these birds are permanent residents and a few come here only to breed. Most, however, use the Bay as a resting and feeding stop on their long migrations. Seventy per cent of the birds that migrate along the Pacific Flyway spend some time each year at San Francisco Bay.

This list, which includes 281 species, was compiled by the San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory with the assistance of many experienced ornithologists and veteran birders. It includes all species that are found in San Francisco Bay and Delta, and their bordering wetlands. It does not include all species that can be found in nearby upland habitats.

The relative abundances printed in this checklist indicate how frequently you might expect to see a bird in its favored habitat. Consult field guides or reference books to learn the specific habitats in which a particular species can be found. This checklist is arranged in accordance with the nomenclature used in the A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds, 6th edition (1983).

Season Symbols

Sp — Spring, March through May
S — Summer, June through August
F — Fall, September through November
W — Winter, December through February

Abundance Symbols

a — abundant — a common species which is very numerous
c — common — certain to be seen in suitable habitat
u — uncommon — present, but not certain to be seen
o — occasional — seen only a few times during a season
r — rare — known to be present, but not every year
* — birds known to nest locally

endangered species



COMMON NAME	Sp	S	F	W
LOONS				
Red-throated Loon	o	r	u	u
Arctic Loon	u		u	u
Common Loon	u	r	u	c
GREBES				
* Pied-billed Grebe	c	c	c	c
Horned Grebe	u	r	u	c
Hood-necked Grebe	r		r	o
* Eared Grebe	a	u	c	a
Western Grebe	c	u	c	c
PELICANS AND CORMORANTS				
American White Pelican	o	c	c	c
Brown Pelican	r	u	u	o
* Double-crested Cormorant	u	c	a	a
Brandt's Cormorant	r	o	r	r
Pelagic Cormorant	u	u	u	r
BITTERNS, HERONS AND EGRETS				
* American Bittern	u	o	u	u
Least Bittern			o	r
* Great Blue Heron	c	o	c	c
* Great Egret	c	c	c	c
* Snowy Egret	a	a	a	a
* Little Blue Heron	o	o	o	r
Cattle Egret	o	o	o	o
* Green-backed Heron	r	o	o	r
* Black-crowned Night-Heron	c	c	c	c
IBIS AND SPOONBILLS				
White-faced Ibis	r		o	
WATERFOWL				
Tundra Swan	r		r	
Greater White-fronted Goose		o	o	
Snow Goose		r	o	
Ross' Goose				
Brant	r		r	r
* Canada Goose	u		r	u
Wood Duck	r		o	o
Green-winged Teal	u	o	u	c
* Mallard	c	c	c	c
* Northern Pintail	c	c	a	a
* Blue-winged Teal	o		o	o
* Cinnamon Teal	c	c	a	c
* Northern Shoveler	c	u	a	c
* Gadwall	u	c	c	c
Eurasian Wigeon		r	r	
American Wigeon	c	u	r	
Canvasback	c	o	c	
Redhead	r		o	o
Ring-necked Duck	r		r	
Greater Scaup	u		o	
* Lesser Scaup	a	o	a	

COMMON NAME	Sp	S	F	W
OLDsquaw				
Black Scoter	r		o	r
Surf Scoter	u		a	a
White-winged Scoter	o		u	u
Common Goldeneye	u	r	u	c
Barrow's Goldeneye	r		o	o
Bufflehead	c	o	c	a
Hooded Merganser	r		o	r
Common Merganser	r		o	r
Red-breasted Merganser	u		u	u
* Ruddy Duck	c	c	a	a
VULTURES				
Turkey Vulture	u	u	u	u
OSPREY, KITES, EAGLES AND HAWKS				
Osprey	r		r	
* Black-shouldered Kite	c	c	c	c
Bald Eagle	r		r	
* Northern Harrier	c	c	c	c
Sharp-shinned Hawk	u		u	u
Cooper's Hawk	o		u	o
* Red-tailed Hawk	c	c	c	c
Ferruginous Hawk			r	c
Rough-legged Hawk	r		r	r
Golden Eagle	r		o	o
FALCONS				
* American Kestrel	c	c	c	c
Merlin	r		r	r
Peregrine Falcon	r		o	u
Prairie Falcon			r	o
GALLINACEOUS BIRDS				
* Ring-necked Pheasant	c	c	c	c
* California Quail	u	u	u	u
RAILS				
* Black Rail	o	o	o	o
* Clapper Rail	c	c	c	c
* Virginia Rail	u	u	u	u
* Sora	u	u	u	u
* Common Moorhen	u	u	u	u
* American Coot	c	c	a	a
PLOVERS				
Black-bellied Plover	a	u	a	c
Lesser Golden-Plover	r		r	r
* Snowy Plover	u	u	u	u
Semipalmated Plover	c	u	c	o
* Killdeer	c	c	c	c

COMMON NAME	Sp	S	F	W
STILTS AND AVOCETS				
* Black-necked Stilt	c	c	a	a
* American Avocet	c	c	a	a
SHOREBIRDS				
Greater Yellowlegs	c	u	c	c
Lesser Yellowlegs	o	o	u	r
Willet	a	c	a	a
Wandering Tattler	r		o	r
Spotted Sandpiper	r	r	r	r
Whimbrel	u	u	u	o
Long-billed Curlew	c	u	c	c
Marbled Godwit	a	o	a	a
Ruddy Turnstone	u	u	u	u
Black Turnstone	u	u	u	u
Red Knot	c	u	c	c
Sanderling	u	u	u	u
Semipalmated Sandpiper	r	o		
Western Sandpiper	a	c	a	a
Least Sandpiper	c	c	a	a
Baird's Sandpiper	r		r	a
Pectoral Sandpiper	r		r	a
Dunlin	c	o	a	a
Short-billed Dowitcher	c	u	c	c
Long-billed Dowitcher	c	o	c	c
SNIPE				
Common Snipe	u	r	u	u
PHALAROPES				
Wilson's Phalarope	u	a	u	
Red-necked Phalarope	c	a	c	r
Red Phalarope	r		o	o
JAEGERS				
Parasitic Jaeger			o	r
GULLS AND TERNS				
Franklin's Gull			r	
Bonaparte's Gull	a	o	a	a
* Heermann's Gull	r	u	u	r
Mew Gull	u	r	u	c
Ring-billed Gull	c	a	a	a
* California Gull	u	a	a	a
Herring Gull	a	o	c	a
Thayer's Gull	u	c	u	u
* Western Gull	c	c	c	c
Glaucous-winged Gull	c	u	c	o
Glaucous Gull	o	r	o	o
* Caspian Tern	c	c	a	r
Elegant Tern	r	u	o	
Common Tern				
* Forster's Tern	c	o	a	u
* Least Tern	u	u	r	
Black Tern	r		r	

COMMON NAME	Sp	S	F	W
SEABIRDS				
Common Murre	r		o	
Pigeon Guillemot	u	u	r	
DOVES				
* Rock Dove	c	c	c	c
* Mourning Dove	c	c	c	c
OWLS				
* Common Barn-Owl	u	u	u	u
* Great Horned Owl	u	u	u	u
* Burrowing Owl	u	u	u	u
* Short-eared Owl	u		u	u
SWIFTS				
Vaux's Swift	o		o	
White-throated Swift	u	u	u	
HUMMINGBIRDS				
* Anna's Hummingbird	u	u	u	u
Rufous Hummingbird	u		u	u
* Allen's Hummingbird	c		o	
KINGFISHERS				
Belted Kingfisher	u		u	u
WOODPECKERS				
Acorn Woodpecker	r		r	
Red-breasted Sapsucker				
Nuttall's Woodpecker	u		u	u
* Downy Woodpecker	u	u	u	u
* Northern Flicker	u	u	u	u
FLYCATCHERS				
Olive-sided Flycatcher	r			
Western Wood-Pewee	r			
Willow Flycatcher			r	
Western Flycatcher	u		u	u
* Black Phoebe	u		u	u
Say's Phoebe	o		o	o
Ash-throated Flycatcher	o			
Western Kingbird	o		r	
LARKS				
* Horned Lark	u		u	
SWALLOWS				
* Tree Swallow	u		u	u
Violet-green Swallow	u		u	o
* Northern Rough-winged Swallow	u			
Bank Swallow	r			
* Cliff Swallow	a		c	c
* Barn Swallow	a			